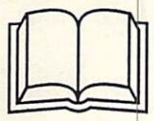


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

September-October 2007

TWO PRINCIPAL PRINCIPLES

Two of the Most Important Verses in all the Bible,
Spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself Regarding
two Fundamental Relationships

* * *

“You have turned this village upside down.”

Renewal is needed--by the Church, and by Me!

“It’s a sin to be good when God calls you to be
great!”

Was God *surprised* that the Jews rejected Jesus, and
thus found it needful to have Jesus crucified?

Reminder and Introduction to our New 2-for-1 Magazine

Alex V. Wilson

As we wrote last month, from now on *Word and Work* will be published every two months instead of eleven times a year. So are you getting 2-months-for-1, or are you getting 6 magazines for 11? Answer: yes! We have added four pages in this month's issue, and hope to continue that – and possibly even more from time to time...though we can't guarantee it.

Please accept our apologies for the "August" issue being so exceedingly late. We really do hope this issue will reach your home during October, but we can't guarantee that either. Please pray for the editor (whom I started to call "feeble-minded," but he might get perturbed at me for that). And for our printer, whose schedule is sometimes too light but sometimes too heavy at the wrong times.

And for our office worker, who must contend monthly with all the burdensome requirements of the postal department (how many issues are sent to this or that county in Kentucky, and to which different U.S. postal zones and to which lands, and how many are paid for and how many are free, etc. etc. Those numbers change each time due to lapsed and/or new subscribers). Also pray for other faithful volunteer workers who help, and for our donors (a number of you have contributed generously in recent months) and prayer-warriors (essential!) and readers (also essential, it would seem). I heartily thank God for each one of you.

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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TWO PRINCIPAL PRINCIPLES

Alex V. Wilson

Amid all the heights of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, a few verses tower up like the peaks of Mount Everest. Two of the loftiest are these:

1. "Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt. 6:33)

2. "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (7:12)

In the first statement, "GOD's kingdom" reminds us of "Love **God** with all your mind, heart and strength." The second statement (Do to OTHERS...) reminds us of "Love your **Neighbor** as you love yourself." Jesus said those are the two greatest commands in God's law. Let's dig deeper into these foundational words of our Christ.

The Pursuit of God

"Seek first God's Kingdom and his Righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

The preceding verses reveal the meaning of *all these things* that He promises us. Verses 19-32 were all about possessions. He spoke about our necessities (food and clothing), but more than that He addresses our scale of values. What do we "treasure"? And how much do we treasure them? How inclined are we to share them? How do we *use* such valuables, and *why*? What motivates us in our use of money, and possessions, and the other things we treasure?

Most unconverted people (and many church people) are all wrapped up in bigger and better *Things*, seeking more, More and MORE! The t-v game shows and the state lotteries are sufficient proof of that statement. So too are closets, attics and garages not only full to the brim but overflowing.

Jesus calls us away from such materialism and idolatry, in which people put possessions near or at the top of their want-lists. He warns us (though He did not use these exact words), *Be very careful what you want, for you may get it!* And if you've formed wrong priorities and pursued useless or even merely secondary treasures, you'll cheat yourselves out of the *highest* values, the true treasures.

Seek *GOD!*

Yes, *SEEK* God!

And seek Him *FIRST!* He alone is worthy of that! A. W. Tozer said, "We want God, it is true, but we want something else *more*—and we get what we want *most!*"

Precious Promise

Then our Lord gives this gracious guarantee: If you do that, your heavenly Father will meet all your needs. "All these things will be given to you." All? That's exactly what He said. All your *needs*, that is. He does not necessarily guarantee all our *wants*, all our "gimmies," all the items on our wish-lists.

Yet note that it "does not say, 'Your Father knows that you *don't* really need these earthly things'; on the contrary, verse 32 says that he 'knows that you *need all* these things,'" comments Dale Bruner. So those things we actually do need, God grandly promises to supply. What a promise! Praise the Lord for that word "all." He is a loving, caring Father. But remember the command that precedes the promise, and seek first

His kingdom -- His kingship over you. J. C. Macauley wrote, "*The finger that points the way is part of the hand that will provide. If we want the hand's provision we must go where the finger points.*" There's an unfailing divine provision, but also an unavoidable human condition.

Where God *guides*, He *provides*. If the Israelites had gone back to Egypt, God would not have given them manna. His unavoidable condition to us is "Seek!" And the verb tense used there is continuous, that is, ongoing: *keep on* seeking; never cease seeking. Seek His kingdom -- obey His kingship over you -- and His righteousness -- walk with integrity of character.

The meaning of that verb is not only continuous but also intensive: "Seek" is not a lackadaisical word. It means to search for something intensely, earnestly, whole-heartedly, passionately. Nothing is sadder than a person with no spiritual hunger and thirst, no drive or passion, but only small interests. To many people in our time, spiritual matters related to God, the Bible, worship, and loving service -- all such things seem blah and boring!

A wonderful hymn says, "The lack of desire is the ill of all ills." But our culture, and the flesh and the Devil all tempt us to be passive, just spectators.

There's so much just to watch and listen to... but for too many church members it ends there—with very little change, growth, ap-

plication or action. What are you, and I, doing? Let's be *seekers*, those who *pursue* God.

I guess that at least in some small way, everyone does seek something – if only seeking to do nothing -- or to seek escape from responsibility by watching soap operas, or wrestling, or even stuff more crude than that! Or being totally absorbed in the chatter and moment-by-moment details of My-space, etc.

So Jesus tells us, Make sure you're not only seeking, but also that you're seeking the right goals, the highest desires, the supreme good—God, and His kingship over you and others, and His righteousness—His holy character. Devote yourself to that which will last forever, and is of highest value. Why waste your life in the trivial and degrading. Think of what you miss if you don't seek God and His good, wholesome and beneficial ways.

Seek F-I-R-S-T the Kingdom of God!

How demanding! How inconvenient! Did Jesus have to say '*first*'?

Yes, for our own good. To keep us from missing out on many rich blessings!

But He also *deserves* our seeking and putting Him first, whether it's to our gain or loss. So, seek Him first even if it seems not to be to your personal advantage.

But, what's it mean to seek Him *first*?

Aspects of 1st-ness

Seek Him *first in your life's history*, in your childhood, early in life: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Eccles. 12:1). Don't say, "Someday when I get older, I'll think about God."

Second, let's seek Him *first in our daily schedule*. Let's lift our waking thoughts to God: "Good morning, Lord. Thank You for another day, and for your presence. I commit to You my heart and circumstances today. I yearn to please You, my Father and King. I seek to do your will." As the psalmist wrote,

O God, You are my God. *Early will I seek You;*
My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.

--Psa. 63:1, NKJV

Third, let's seek Him *first in our priorities, first in preeminence*. Once I asked a teenager who was regular in attending church but careless in her conduct: "Betty, are you really following the Lord?" She assured me that indeed she was. "Well, Betty, here's another question: Can you honestly pray this prayer? **'Lord, I want to do Your will—no matter what it is, no matter what it costs'?**"

She hung her head and said, "No. No, I can't honestly say that." How sad, for such commitment is not set forth as an advanced step for the few folks who want to be outstanding saints. In the Bible such commitment is not compared to getting your spiritual PhD, but more like enrolling in God's kindergarten. It's included in the repentance required when you enter His school—not an advanced degree. Of course after our initial repentance we still have vast growing to do. But we have taken our stand for Christ. As the song says, "I have decided to follow Jesus – No turning back!" That's what it means to seek God's kingdom first. It starts with such surrender.

Once more Tozer's searching words confront us:

It is not an uncommon sight in any church to see one or two who are *ablaze* for God, while the rest accept things rather calmly and without much interest... It may be set down as an axiom that **our spiritual condition perfectly corresponds to the intensity of our desire**. Each of us enjoys as much grace as he actually wants. Where that principle seems untrue, it is clear that our desire is not as great as we had had supposed. *We want God, it is true, but we want something else more. And we get what we want most.*

Seeking First His Kingdom

That means to pursue more and more to live under His Kingship, His Rule.

"Your Kingdom come" means "my kingdom go." The Jewish teachers often expressed their teaching in parallel statements, repeating the same thought in different words. Thus "Your Kingdom come" is explained by the next phrase, "Your will be done." I hope every reader of this can pray those words sincerely, and not be like Betty.

An illustration

Centuries ago, before exact geographical boundaries were established and accurate maps were made, the kings of Laos and Vietnam reached an agreement on taxation in the border areas of their kingdoms. The basis was not on exact location -- which was hard to determine -- but on lifestyle and practices.

People who ate short-grain rice, built their houses on stilts, and decorated them with serpents as practiced in India -- these were considered Laotians and paid taxes to Laos' government. But people who ate long-grain rice, built their houses on the ground, and decorated them with Chinese-style dragons -- these were considered Vietnamese and paid taxes to the government of Vietnam. People could tell who you were by how you lived.

Can people tell who *we* are by how we live—not just outward practices, but our standards, values and character as well?

Another way they could have solved that ancient taxation dispute would be if they simply asked folks, "When you use the term, 'My king,' which ruler do you mean -- the king of Vietnam or of Laos? Who is the Sovereign you acknowledge and obey?" We today should answer that question too, telling folks "I sought citizenship in the kingdom of God, and Christ graciously gave me that privilege. He is my King as well as Savior." But in addition to our outward *pledge* of allegiance is the test of practical *obedience* to the ruler we claim to follow. Am I following the values and standards He taught and exemplified?

For Jesus added that to seek first his kingdom also involves seeking first "His Righteousness." To have Him as King means we will seek to live by his commands, such as He gave in Matt. 5. He calls us to righteousness, love and forgiveness, purity and self-control. He calls us to go the second mile in sacrificial service.

This leads us on to the Golden Rule, the other principal principle of our study this month.

"Seek what you want, but learn to want the best things."

--author unknown

* * *

"Be careful what you want, for you will get it."

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

* * *

"He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He *rewards* those who *earnestly seek him*."

--Hebrews 11:6. Same main thought as Matt. 6:33.

Divine Ethics in a Nutshell

Jesus said, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Matt. 7:12

The verse begins with "So"; or some other versions say, "Therefore." So, as has often been said, we should ask what the therefore is there for. That word always points us back to what went before it.

The preceding verse says, "If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So..." Therefore--.

Since God is generous and supplies us our needs, we too should be great givers.

More than that, since He is generous and loves to give us good gifts, we can be free from fearful self-centeredness -- free from anxious grasping -- free from the inner drive to assert ourselves because of insecurity.

Do we get it? Our good and great Father-God loves us extravagantly. *So* let's trust Him for our needs. *And* let's relax, casting all our anxieties on Him. We need not worry about ourselves and our necessities. Instead, being freed from such self-centered concerns, we can and should concentrate on the needs of *others* and how we can reach out to help them.

Our Lord continues, "So, in everything...." There He goes interfering again!

Everything? Yes, everything! He really wants us to take this seriously.

At the end of this sentence He goes so far as to say that this statement summarizes all of God's Word, all His will for us. This is what the Bible is all about in its revelation of God's plan for our conduct and character. He condenses all the demands of His law and all the teachings of His prophets into this one statement, Treat others as you want to be treated by others.

The typical non-Christian way of life is to "treat others *as* they treat you, only do it first." But Jesus' way is not that, but -- Treat others as you *want* them to treat you!

This broad general principle settles a thousand difficult questions. It prevents the necessity of laying down endless little rules for our conduct in each and every specific case.

At opening night of a Christian camp one summer, the director told the campers: "We Have Only 1 Rule this week: 'Do to others as you would have them do to you.' You do that and we'll have a great week."

Well, we must admit that when dealing with children or any immature folks, that's a bit of a stretch. Can't you hear a camper telling his counselor, "If I were counselor I'd let *you* stay up till 2:00 A.M., so you should let *me* stay up till then..."?) But basically the rule is true.

In fact it's so obviously true that many religions and philosophies teach some form of this principle. Socrates and Aristotle taught it. So did Confucius, who counseled: "Do not do to others what you would not wish done to yourself." And Rabbi Hillel taught, "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else." But all of them expressed it in a negative way: "Do *not* treat others as you do not like to be treated by others."

Jesus went beyond them and put it *positively*: "Do to others as you want them to do to you." That goes a lot farther. Oswald Sanders explains, "It is *easier not to do* bad things [such as steal from someone], than to *do something positive* [such as giving to meet their need]. Mere inaction will achieve the former, but it takes firm resolve to say, 'I will go out of my way to be as kind, helpful, and generous to others as I would wish them to be to me.'"

Yes, to follow Jesus means more than avoiding wrongdoing. To follow Confucius' rule would *prevent* me from beating up my neighbor. But to follow Jesus would *inspire* me to rescue my neighbor from danger—even at risk to myself.

"It is one thing to say, 'I must not harm my fellows.' It is quite another to say, 'I must go out of my way to help them.' The first could be fulfilled by inaction; the second only by self-sacrificial love." (Michael Green)

Let's Follow this Rule!

Let's *forgive* others as I want them (and God) to forgive me. *Pray* for others as I want them to pray for me. *Help* others as I want them to help me. *Give* to others..., and so forth.

In our homes, our families, let's make this rule our rule. At work, on the job, let's aspire to treat others in this way. With our neighbors, let's treat them as we want to be treated.

In our relations with our fellow church members, let's lead the way and show others the beauty of this Golden Rule. And if we fail, let's ask forgiveness as we want others to ask it from us. And extend forgiveness as well.

Let's Share This With Our Youth

Especially when they go off to college and live in a dorm, urge them to:

Treat the property of others as you want them to treat yours. Write letters to your parents as you want them to write you. Do not gossip about your room-mate as you don't want her/him to gossip about you. Keep your side (and even more) of your dorm room clean as you want your roommate to.... Try to understand her/him as you want.... In disagreements with her/him, compromise as you want.... In that very last point, however, we refer only to *personal preferences* (what music or programs to listen to; how late to let friends visit, etc.) – but **not** your *moral standards!*

May All of Us...

Follow this golden rule of our Savior and Master, with all our hearts. But also, may we trust the Giver of this rule to forgive us when we fall short. Thank God, that's why He died, arose again, and intercedes now as our great high Priest.

Let's also trust Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit--to make the Golden Rule possible and do-able by us. "His power can make us what we ought to be," thank God. And He *will* make us what we ought to be, if—*if* we First of all, Seek Him, Seek His Kingdom, Seek His Righteousness.

*Can we really live by those principles Jesus emphasized?
Yes! Read the following unforgettable testimony.*

James DeForest Murch -- A Humble Giant

Introduction: The article following this one contains excerpts from *Adventuring for Christ in Changing Times*. This is the autobiography of a man we ought to know more about, one of the outstanding 20th Century leaders in the Stone-Campbell Movement. Though he was active all his life in the "independent Christian Churches," he influenced Churches of Christ also in various ways, including close association with R. H. Boll, former editor of *Word and Work*. For years Murch invited him to present daily "morning devotions" at the Cedar Lake *Christian Action* conferences. And in

his autobiography he called Boll "undoubtedly the greatest expository preacher of the day in the Restoration Movement." Murch lived from 1892-1973. He was a giant in spiritual leadership. He was active in local churches, sometimes as preacher, more often as an elder, and usually as Sunday School superintendent. Yet his main call was as organizer and leader of many "parachurch" ministries both in and beyond the Stone/Campbell Movement, and as writer and editor of leading nationwide Christian magazines.

For example, working for Standard Publishing Company in Cincinnati, he became editor of *The Lookout*, then was founding editor of *Restoration Herald*. He also became a co-founder both of the North American Christian Convention, and the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, and founded a radio ministry.

He also helped co-found the National Association of Evangelicals, and for some years edited its magazine, *United Evangelical Action*. He was founder and president of the National Sunday School Association, of the National Association of Religious Broadcasters, and of the Evangelical Press Association! (What did he do in his spare time?) Then for some years he served as managing editor of the magazine *Christianity Today*.

Yes, he was a giant, but a humble one. In the closing pages of his autobiography he wrote: "Above all things earthly, I would give thanks and pay tribute to God for his guidance and goodness and blessing. I rejoice that I have known Christ and walked and talked with Him all the days of my Christian life. To Him I owe my life and breath. To Him I owe the blessings of answered prayer. To Him I owe the joys of conscious forgiveness when I have strayed from His will and His way. To Him I owe the achievements and the victories I have experienced.

"What I have done is worthy of nothing. Only what God has done for me and through me is worthy of everlasting and thankful praise."

Following are excerpts adapted from Murch's autobiography.

Renewal Needed--by the Church, and by Me!

James DeForest Murch

This period of my life [the mid-1930's] was characterized by the deepest despair and then by the highest spiritual exaltation I ever experienced.

Conditions in the world and in the churches almost caused me to lose my faith. We had come through World War I with its wholesale carnage. Then came the wild orgy of pseudo-prosperity in America, with all its extravagance. The inevitable result was the Great Depression of 1929-1936. There were 10,000,000 unemployed; 20,000,000 on relief. Moral codes were abandoned. There was economic and social confusion bordering on revolution. The destruction of western civilization was actually happening before our eyes.

The institutional churches were miserably failing. They were more interested in perpetuating worn-out human dogmas, building cathedrals and strengthening their hierarchies than doing the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. Liberalism was rampant in their colleges and seminaries, and thousands of their ministers no longer gave credence to the Holy Scriptures. Their church rolls were filled with hypocrites. Worldliness impregnated most of them.

Our conservative churches were not plagued by that kind of unbelief, but many of them were guilty of pharisaism and other forms of legalism which had virtually destroyed the spirit of Christ and resulted in strife, division, sectarianism and bigotry. Real prayer and Holy Spirit guidance were almost foreign to their thinking and their practice. I was forced to agree with a cynical friend of mine that "America has been inoculated with a mild form of Christianity and seems to be immune to the real thing."

Many a sleepless night was spent futilely in seeking a way out of my problems, my doubts and frustrations. [By this time Murch had already been active in Christ's service for years, including preaching and writing and editing.--avw] When I was almost on the verge of losing my faith in God and man, a startling spiritual experience came to me.

One unforgettable night, after a crushing day, my heart despairingly bowed down, I awoke startled by a Voice. I looked about, but there was no one else in the room. Then there flashed into my mind like a blinding light the words of Romans 12:1-2.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

I had read that passage of Scripture scores of times but now it was the special direct Word of God to me. He had spoken it by Living Presence through the Holy Spirit. IT WAS THE ANSWER TO MY PLEA! IT WAS THE WAY OUT! As I analyzed this Scripture passage I saw in it a plan for a "Crusade for Christian Action." It had three directives: (1) *Consecration*--complete surrender and commitment to Christ. (2) *Restudy of the Scriptures*--Essential to the rediscovery of the whole will of God for our lives. (3) *Experimental action*--putting re-discovered truth into action beginning in our individual lives, and then in our homes, our churches, our communities, and the world.

A Song is Born

As I sought to carry out the plan in my own life I had another unforgettable experience which I shall relate. One Sunday as I was sitting in my library I confronted myself with the question, "Are you putting Jesus Christ first in your life by complete surrender and commitment to Him?" I picked up an old envelope from my desk and began to jot down the things that seemed most important in my life. The list ran something like this: My work. My family. My property. My personal comfort. My social relationships.

Then I asked myself the question, "Would I be willing to put Christ first--ahead of my social life?" I had never before realized the grip the things of this world had on my life. The great illusion which hinders mankind in its effort to discover reality is THIS WORLD. We are kept bound and gagged by our trust in temporal things. Even so-called Christians love the world more than they love Christ.

I went on until I came to my family--my wife--my dear son. God has blessed me with a wonderful family. Could I actually put Jesus *first--ahead of them?* I recalled that when Jesus called men to His discipleship in the old days He said: "Except a man give up father, mother, brother, sister, houses and lands for my sake he is not worthy to be my disciple." The problem was a difficult one. If you don't believe it, try it yourself.

Well, to make a long story short, with tears coming from the depths of my soul I made the surrender. It wrenched and devastated me. I know now I was being recreated--made over into a different person. I had opened my life to God in a way I had never done be-

fore and He had come in. I was conscious of a Presence with me, and descending upon me a kind of cleansing force throughout my mind and active consciousness, much as a fireman's hose would flush out a clogged tile. Then with sterilizing effect it seemed that my entire inner being was purified as a laboratory technician cleanses his instruments, and this was followed with a feeling that my whole self was being flooded with light, and the Voice said, "I have forgiven thee and redeemed thee. Henceforth you are not your own; you are mine. I claim you for my witness." And a release of tension and a peace of heart came to me that was indescribably wonderful. From that day my life has been showered with riches and blessings far greater than I had ever dared think.

Out of this experience came my song. "I'll Put Jesus First in My Life." The words and music came to me in bed one morning about three o'clock. I am no musician, so I call it "the song the Lord gave me." Its chorus says,

In all that I say,
In all that I do,
Throughout this world
of toil and strife,
By day and by night,
Through trust in His might,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.

[The entire song follows this article.]

The Lord has used this song in a marvelous way as a factor in bringing thousands of decisions for Christ, decisions for restoration and renewal and decisions for full time Christian service.

A Movement is Born.

Then I began an intensive restudy of the New Testament in the spirit of Thomas and Alexander Campbell to discover the genius of apostolic Christianity and consider how it could be restored in my day. I sought guidance of the Holy Spirit that I might be able to put aside all human traditional concepts and practices and accept only the truth revealed in the Word of God. Out of this came my *Christian Action Bible Studies* which might well have been titled "What It Means to Be a New Testament Christian." [Murch then wrote articles in the *Restoration Herald* explaining these things. Here is a small part of what he wrote.]

A deep conviction came to me, that the reason why we are in such a desperate situation is that the answer of God has ceased to be exercised through the modern churches. The churches are spiritually dead. The Restoration Movement began with the aim, "The

Restoration of the New Testament Church in Doctrine, Ordinances, and Life." We restored the doctrine. We have claimed to restore the ordinances. *But we have made no appreciable progress in restoring the life of that apostolic era! . . .*

We need to accept Jesus Christ as our all and in all. We need to give up the world, our selfishness--everything that we are and possess--lay all on the altar a living sacrifice! His thoughts need to become our thoughts, His love our love, His will our will. This is the goal of the Crusade for CHRISTIAN ACTION which is being born in our midst today. There need be no flourish of trumpets, no elaborate schemes or programs--simply the opening of our hearts and lives to Christ, letting Him come in to use us to His glory! This is distinctly and wholly a *spiritual* program...

The Results

An artistic and attractive pamphlet, "What Is Christian Action?" was published and made available free for distribution by the hundreds of thousands. It is impossible to convey to the reader the impact and the blessings of this adventure of faith. Thousands of groups adopted the weekly Bible Studies, including Bible classes, home study gatherings, mid-week prayer meetings. Each participant took the following pledge: "I believe with all my heart that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God and I accept Him as the Master of my life. Trusting in my Lord for strength I present myself to Him a living sacrifice, and I promise Him that I will strive to do whatsoever He would have me do, as the Holy Spirit reveals His will to me, in the Word of God." Everyone had to carry his own Bible and be prepared to read the passages of Scripture assigned. Questions and answers were designed to give a comprehensive harmony of all the Bible taught on a given theme. At the conclusion of each study the group was asked what implications the teaching had for their everyday lives and each individual was required to put them into practice regardless of the cost. The following week personal experiences and testimonies were shared with the group.

Thousands of lives were changed. I recall a noted socialite--an alcoholic--who gave up all for Christ and was cured; a college professor who was born again; a clandestine love affair that was ended; a bell-hop in a hotel who resigned because he could no longer be a party to evil deeds; an embezzler who made restitution; a housewife who gave up evil speaking and gossip; a discouraged preacher who had left the ministry but met Christ anew and started all over again; a timid soul who became an outstanding church leader; a vagrant saved from suicide; a broken home restored and made happy; a social worker who took Christ as a Partner in her ministries; a church leader who died to self and exalted Christ; a woman saved from in-

sanity. This was the work that the church should have been doing all along, but thousands of congregations had lost their touch with the living Christ and were failing to be media for changing and transforming lives. Christian Action was the means God used to restore them to their apostolic task.

I'LL PUT JESUS FIRST

The world all about me has now no allure:
Its pleasures bring pain, its wisdom is vain;
I seek a foundation that's steadfast and sure:
I'll put Jesus first in my Life.

The Lord Jesus died my salvation to win:
He went in my stead to Calv'ry and bled;
Redemption impels me to give up all sin:
I'll put Jesus first in my Life.

I know there's a home for the ransomed and blest,
When death is no more, when struggle is o'er,
For those who love Jesus and give Him their best:
I'll put Jesus first in my Life.

Though earth's tribulations continue each day,
Though pleasures may call, though evil enthrall,
His grace will protect me for ever and aye:
I'll put Jesus first in my Life.

Chorus:

In all that I say, in all that I do,
Throughout this world of toil and strife,
By day and by night, through trust in His might,
I'll put Jesus first in my Life.

- *James DeForest Murch*

VOICES from the FIELDS

Heather and Philip Ashley

August, 2007

[See the July W&W for the background to this letter. The following is condensed from Heather's report after their trip to a remote village in Papua New Guinea. Both she and Philip grew up as Wycliffe Bible Translator missionary-kids. In fact Heather grew up in the village they just re-visited!--avw]

The huge Pacific moon was rising over the coconut trees in Tiap. I sat with my sister Brigette around a fire with our village "uncle," Steven Dazim. His soft voice detailed the progress of the Aruamu Old Testament translation and the spiritual state of the Aruamus. After a while the topic turned to the crusade which we had traveled back to our childhood home to facilitate. Steven enthused, "You don't hear what is said out on the paths. But I do, and you have turned this village upside down." We had a fabulous team facilitating the crusade. It was quite a conglomeration of people—but the Lord helped us work together for his glory in a wonderful way. An overwhelming 200 kids showed up to the VBS—and Brigette and others did a wonderful job of sharing scripture through the curriculum that she had developed.

The Lord truly did turn things upside down through the preaching and also the testimonies that each of our team members gave. After each teaching session we had deep, heart-wrenching prayer ministry times with men and women that came forward. Ten people gave their lives to the Lord, and were baptized into Christ! Many others also recommitted their lives to Christ.

During the prayer times the men and women poured their hearts out to us. Many of the Aruamu women struggle with husbands that are antagonistic towards their faith. Countless women shared that they had been or were being verbally or physically abused by their husbands for coming to church. Others were grieving over the death of loved ones, and struggling to provide for themselves and their families. The men asked for prayer on breaking negative habits, freedom from alcoholism, or laziness, or other problems. There were deep hurts and heartaches being poured out around the throne of God and it was a privilege to intercede with these brothers and sisters. During some of the more interactive times they also asked us some very deep questions, many of which are common to Christians the world over. Here are some examples of the questions that they asked: How do we know which Aruamu customs to keep and which we should refrain from as Christians? How do we know that we are saved and what is the mark of the Spirit? What do we do when our husbands beat us? Which denomination is right on women talking in church? How do we raise our children up to love and fear the Lord? In each of these it seemed that the best advice we could offer them

was to delve into God's Word in their own language and use it, not our words, to answer their difficult questions. Please pray that the Aruamu people will take this to heart, overcome the challenge of learning to read in their own language, and diligently study their Aruamu New Testaments.

Philip spent hours setting up the projector system to show The Passion, The Nativity, and various Old Testament videos. Hundreds of people showed up to see these each night.

We had little idea what the Lord would do when we felt Him leading us to go on this trip. All we knew was that we had already turned in our quit-dates for work and the mission trip we had been going on was cancelled. We had a free month before medical school started so we committed to the trip as logistics coordinators. Then we got the unnerving news about mom's ovarian tumor. Bobby and Brigitte headed over to Papua New Guinea on their own, so they could carry on with the plans to lead VBS in the country. We planned to follow several weeks later, and the team from Cornerstone Christian Church would follow. By the Lord's grace, Mom's tumor was benign, but she still could not come to PNG while she was recovering from surgery. Without her and Dad, Philip and I were instantly promoted from coordinating the team's travel logistics to leading the team! The job was daunting—but the Lord was faithful, and we were completely overwhelmed with His provision, what he did, and what he taught us!

We are now back in the United States, and have just begun orientation for medical school at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. We would like to go into medical missions long term—and are extremely excited about UTMB's international programs. Although we feel that missions and medicine are callings in our lives, we want to make sure the Lord, our marriage, and our families rank higher in our priorities than any career.

John McNerney — B.C. & A.C.

by Julius Hovan

The life of John K. McNerney can clearly be divided into two parts — B.C. and A.C. That is, before Christ and after Christ.

He was born in Maryland in 1949 into a family of eight children. He was educated in parochial schools but stated there was almost no Bible instruction.

As a young adult, he traveled the country selling magazines. After a failed marriage, he settled in Gallatin, Tennessee, and worked for Donnelly Printing Company. There he met Sheila, who became his wife. As with many from his era, church had no place but a party

spirit prevailed resulting in over-consumption of alcohol (that habit resulted in disease and death at the age of 58).

Fortunately, someone at work led him to Christ. He and Sheila and their daughter, Kristy, began attending the Gallatin Church of Christ and became very active. John was encouraged to meet with the minister each week for study and direction. This resulted in his becoming an avid Bible student and soon an able speaker (the mentoring went on for over a year).

He spoke from the Gallatin pulpit several times and showed promise as a speaker. When the Parksville Church needed a minister, he felt led to accept their invitation to try out.

To be able to accept the position offered to him, two things had to happen. First, Donnelly had to offer an early retirement package. They had two and he was, at great odds, able to get one. Second, there needed to be a position at the Donnelly plant in Danville, Kentucky, for Sheila. In the providence of God, she got a job there and they moved to Parksville.

They served the church for almost 15 years. A large crowd attended his funeral service, including one he led to the Lord at work. Sheila plans to live in Danville. Pray for her to find a job (she is to be commended for caring for John 24/7, especially the last months of his life).

John's life portrayed the truth of the theme verse at his memorial service: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come." (2 Cor. 5:17)

[There will be more about John in the next issue. —AVW]

The Road

Janis Preston Spicer

Daddy owned a 1955 Chevrolet when I was 16 years old. I had just gotten my permit and Daddy took it into his head that I should learn how to drive a stick shift. So he put me behind the wheel of that old '55 and instructed me as to how to manage the clutch and shift the gears. I had an awful time trying to get the hang of easing out on the clutch while easing in on the gas and there were a lot of neck-snapping starts and stops before we finally got rolling along towards his brother's house in Mercer County.

Now, back in those days, there were still tollbooths on the Bluegrass Parkway, so when we got to the Harrodsburg exit, I stopped to pay our toll. And I couldn't get going again. Every time I tried to ease that clutch out, I killed the engine. Over and over and over again. I don't know which was worse - seeing the tollbooth guy

standing over there grinning at me like it was the funniest thing he had ever seen, or watching my daddy out of the corner of my eye expecting him to start fussing any minute because I wasn't doing it right, or being so frustrated myself because I was not able to make that stupid car GO! Daddy never said a word, bless his heart. He just sat there in that passenger seat looking straight ahead and never opened his mouth.

Years later, Dad himself began to have some trouble with his driving. In particular, he began to have a tendency to wait too long before starting to brake. As I rode along with him, it seemed to me as if we were always in imminent danger of rear-ending the car in front of us. So, when we got to a point where I thought he should start braking, I would start pushing down on the floorboard as hard as I could as if I could do the braking for him from my side of the car. Once or twice, he caught me at it and he would just grin and ask if my brakes were working okay. But I never said a word to him about it.

Just like my daddy gave me instructions about the clutch, God gives us instructions about our lives. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you." (Psalm 32:8). He keeps His eye on us as we set off down our personal parkways. We might occasionally get hung up at the tollbooth, but when we do He doesn't laugh at us or fuss at us or even demand that we get out of the way and let Him do it. "Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you." (Isaiah 30:18). He waits for us, just like my daddy waited for me. We may spend years on the road, doing just fine, but eventually we get too comfortable with the trip and start paying less attention to the things He has taught us. "I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be." (Deuteronomy 32:20). Just as I watched those cars in front of Daddy, He watches us as we get closer and closer to disaster. And He no doubt wants to brake for us, as I wanted to brake for Daddy. "The Lord is ... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9).

Daddy would have gladly taken over for me at that tollbooth. And I would have gladly stopped Daddy before he rear-ended the car in front of us. All either of us was waiting for was to be asked. And that's how God must feel about us, as well. "There is none like the God of Israel, who rides the heavens to your help, and through the skies in His majesty." (Deuteronomy 33:26). All He's waiting for is for us to ask.

Does Your Furniture Face An IDOL?

Sonny Childs

One of our favorite family events comes in the evening. The boys and I drag out the Legos or Lincoln Logs, dump them on the floor and, while Cindy reads a good book to us, we build forts, castles and other guy stuff. Isn't it funny how, in this day of life-like special effects computer games and action figures that can do almost anything, it is the simple, timeless toys like Lincoln Logs or Legos that often bring us the most pleasure?

Since we unplugged cable TV two years ago, life has been soooooo much more family friendly. We read books, play games and actually talk to each other again. We have put the one-eyed monster in its place! I am so thankful Cindy lovingly encouraged me to be a real man, take control of my family and make that difficult decision. I'm not saying it was easy - a lot like breaking an addiction, but I would encourage everyone to try it. You don't have to smash the set, just take control of it. Stop giving the world uncontrolled access to your house through cable and/or satellite programming.

We still watch shows. The difference is, we buy only the ones we want. We invest in DVD collections rather than cable/satellite connections. It's great!

There are no commercials teaching young minds that they just can't survive without the next level of materialism, no excuse to park our brains and let others mesmerize us into a fantasy world of sex, violence and gutter talk, no more manipulation from a pagan propaganda box that wants to disrupt our peaceful home. We choose what we want and want what we choose. The rest can stay on the shelf.

Did you ever think about modern-day idolatry? Few of us actually bow before graven images anymore, but, make no mistake, idolatry is still alive and well, even in Christian homes. Think about your living room. In what direction does every piece of furniture face? What is the center focal point of the room in which your family lives? We gather around it. We let it instruct us. We even offer it sacrifices through our monthly cable/ satellite bill. The TV is truly one of America's greatest idols.

By definition, an idol is anything that comes between you and God. It seems like something you cannot live without. Like an addiction, it demands your attention, loyalty and sacrifices.

Let me ask you a personal, yet possibly soul-saving question. Could you live without your TV? Are you sure? Prove it! I dare you! Take this challenge: unplug the cable/ satellite from your home for

just one month. Send me an email and let me know how you and your family react. I guarantee it won't be easy. The first week was our hardest. However, the withdrawal pains emphasized to me just how much control that little black box had taken over the life of my family. For the sake of God's blessing on my home, I had to do something. It was hard, but looking back now, I can say without hesitation it was one of the best decisions I ever made.

So will you take my challenge? Aw, come on! Don't let your mind rush past it. If TV is not your idol, then the exercise will be a breeze. If TV is your idol, then you most definitely want to know it. Few things receive God's wrathful response like idolatry. So what about it? Will you take my challenge?

[From My WorldView Email:sonny@sonnychilds.com]

< POINTS to PONDER >

Walking God's way

Beth Moore

Scripture frequently tells us why we should walk God's way instead of ours:

"God...always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ"

(2 Cor. 2:14).

Imagine going to heaven and standing by God as He lovingly shows you His plan for your life. It begins with the day you are born. Once you received Christ as Savior, every day that follows is outlined in red. You see footprints walking through each day of your life. On many of the days, two sets of footprints appear.

You inquire: "Father, are those my footprints every day, and is the second set of prints when You joined me?"

He answers, "No, My precious Child. The consistent footprints are Mine. The second set of footprints are when you joined Me."

"Where were You going, Father?"

"To the destiny I planned for you, hoping you'd follow."

"But, Father, where are my footprints all those times?"

“Sometimes you went back to look at old resentments and habits. Sometimes, you chose your own path. Other times, your footprints appear on another person’s calendar because you liked their plan better. Sometimes, you simply stopped because you would not let go of something you could not take with you.”

“But, Father, we ended up okay even if I didn’t walk with You every day, didn’t we?”

He holds you close and smiles, “Yes, Child, we ended up okay. But, you see, okay was never what I had in mind for you.”

[The above reminds me of what David Ingalls said at Woodland Camp’s Senior Citizen Week: “It’s a sin to be good. That is, it’s a sin to be good when God calls you to be great!”

* * *

Sacrifice—by Non-Christians and by Us

David Lipscomb

“Why is it that we see men willing to sacrifice property, the comforts of home, the sweets of the domestic and family relationship, undergo privations and sorrows, suffer hunger, and cold, and nakedness, and want for long and weary years, and freely give up life itself at the bidding of earthly rulers and for the sake of corrupt and perishing human kingdoms, while so few are willing to undergo the slightest inconvenience or suffer the least self-denial for the heavenly and eternal kingdom?

“Why is it that we even see men who profess to be members of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, willing to suffer the loss of all things, property, children, and their own life’s blood for the earthly kingdom, yet are unwilling to spend a very small portion of time or money for the Kingdom and cause of God. Why is it?”

—*Gospel Advocate*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (January 9, 1866): 31.

* * *

An Interesting Book Review by David Lipscomb in 1878

“*THE PROPHETIC CONFERENCE*,”

Gospel Advocate 20 (November 21, 1878), p. 725.

We have received a copy of the *New York Tribune*, Extra no. 46, containing a summary of the papers and addresses presented at the conference of believers in the pre-millennial advent of Christ.

The meeting was composed of men of ability and character from all the various leading denominations of the country. Those from the Baptists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians predominating. The addresses were confined to the idea of the re-appearance of the Savior before and preparatory to the advent of the millennium. The speeches, so far as we have read them, are in good spirit and do honor to the word of God. There is not hobbyism about it that we see. Christ's coming is clearly taught as a part of God's revelation to man. It should be studied, taught and cherished as part of God's will to man. Whether his coming precedes or succeeds the conversion of the world to God we have not decided. We are glad to see that they distinctly disavow a belief in the ability of man to know the time of the Savior's appearing.

Those feeling an interest in the subject will be repaid by a perusal of these addresses. The only danger in this question is of narrow minds making it a hobby to disturb the peace of churches. Address the *New York Tribune*. Price 15 cents.

[Brother Lipscomb's closing words are a needed warning to everyone, whatever views we hold re: prophecy or other doctrines. The above review may be found on *The Restoration Movement* website.]

* * *

Speaking of That Website....

It's been a while since we've mentioned the vast resources available at the excellent website of Dr. Hans Rollmann, from which we quoted the preceding item. You may Google it at *The Restoration Movement*, or access it via the following URL: <http://www.mun.ca/reis/restmov/digital/ww/WW.HTM>

Here is the "Welcome" to that site: "These pages are for your reading and viewing pleasure and feature historical texts, pictures, resources for historical research and links to other relevant pages dealing with the Restoration Movement. This 19th-century unity and restitution effort by Barton W. Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell spawned several distinct religious groups: the Churches of Christ, the Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ.... The Restoration Movement pages seek to accommodate the historical heritage of all of these religious traditions."

Brother Rollmann, whose articles have appeared in W&W from time to time, is not only a university professor of religious studies and church history but also—as might be expected—an exhaustive researcher. My delightful search of his site's various pages reveals that you may read Bible studies and other articles by Alexander

Campbell, Thomas Campbell, Barton Stone, Robert Richardson—early leaders and teachers in the movement. And later ones like James A. Harding and J. W. McGarvey. And men from our times like Carl Ketcherside (with articles from his *Mission Messenger*) and Leroy Garrett (with articles from *Restoration Review*).

Word and Work is online there too: the contents of all the years during the editorships of Stanford Chambers, 9/1913-12/1915 (earlier he was an assistant editor only), and R. H. Boll, 1916-1956. Over forty years' of WW articles online!

Also, in a different section 15 articles or pamphlets by Brother Chambers are available. (Too bad that all but one are about prophecy, which may give the impression that nearly all he wrote was on that topic.) And 49 separate items by Brother Boll are listed! Several of them are articles or tracts (such as a refutation of C. T. Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses—whose beliefs Boll was sometimes accused of believing!). But also there are entire books, such as *Truth and Grace* (a collection of early articles he wrote); *Romans*; *Hebrews*; *Galatians*; *Revelation*; and his discussion with Brother Boles regarding Christ's 2nd Coming. Articles by H. L. Olmstead are also available on this site.

Many thanks to Brother Rollmann and his co-workers (including his son and also Ernst Stefanik), for their immense toils to make all these and other resources available to the general public.

What Some Folks Think Premills Believe

A friend in Illinois who formerly preached in the premillennial churches wrote, "I believe much of the opposition to the premill position is in not understanding what is really believed. In our monthly elder/preacher symposium in this area, we have been discussing the various interpretations of Revelation. A report was made by one brother on the premillennial position. It wasn't particularly negative, but something he stated caused me to speak up, for he failed to understand your view of prophecy.

"He said that the premill view is that God was *surprised* that the Jews rejected Jesus, and so found it needful to have Jesus crucified and bring in the *unexpected* church-age. I said that no premill brother that I've ever met held such a view, and that [Christ's redemptive death] was in God's mind from eternity. In the discussion that followed I pointed out that you do not make the view a test of fellowship, and exhibit a better knowledge and emphasis on God's grace than is common among amill brethren. All was taken well, with no negative reaction."

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

33rd Annual Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship... is being planned for **Nov. 12-15, 2007** at the Glenmora Church of Christ. Night theme: "Unity in Christ as Seen in Ephesians. Each night Dr. David Wead will present an exposition from the text. There are two daytime themes: Joy in Christ & Signs of Christ's Coming. Speakers will include: Bruce Runner, Don McGee, Robby Bacon, and Bennie Hill. Evening services for the youth will be conducted by Sonny Childs with Robin Gough. On Monday night at the beginning of the service a memorial tribute will be given for the preaching servants who have been called to their reward: Earl Mullins, Jerry Samples, Nathan Burks, and Antoine Valdetero. For information/ accommodations call: Dennis LeDoux at (318)748-4243.

United Song Rally at South Louisville Christian Church, Dec. 30 p.m. A number of Louisville-area Churches of Christ hold an area-wide song rally every time a month has 5 Sundays. A number of Louisville-area Christian Churches do the same. Bob Kastens, who ministers at South Louisville Christian Church, has invited all those congregations—COC and CC—to meet there — at 3845 Southern Parkway, very near to where 3rd St. becomes So. Pkwy. (It's a stone's throw from Churchill Downs.) The day: Dec. 30. The time: 6:00. Why: To sing praise to God, and meet brothers and sisters from both sides of the keyboard! All singing that evening will be *a cappella*, so no one need stay away due to any qualms. 4 song-leaders from each

group will help us worship the Lord and exhort each other. There may be some special numbers also. Portland Christian School is offered a table to present promotional materials; and there will be light refreshments afterwards. We urge all who love the Lord, and His people, and good singing — come join this joyful occasion.

A few years ago, at the urging of Nathan Burks, Brother Kastens began attending our monthly Louisville-area church-leaders lunch and meeting. And earlier this year he asked Julius Hovan and Alex Wilson to take part in the "School of Christian Living" week at South Louisville. We thank God for his efforts to build bridges of fellowship.

Community Church of Christ (near Louisville): Elmer Wheatley, our minister, announced his retirement effective the end of October, 2007. We are searching for a minister to fill the pulpit. If you are a candidate or know someone who might be interested, contact Ron Flora, 262 Meadowlark Lane, Shepherdsville, KY 40165. 502-543-6348 (Home); 502-543-1537 (Fax); yosemite@alltel.net

Seeking a Minister Please pray with us, that God will send a minister to **Cypress Creek Church, Louisiana**. We have had 4 baptisms this year, and 5 placed membership. God is not through with us yet. --Charles L. Seal, 318-748-8572, LSeal50868@aol.com This is where Jerry Samples preached for 22 years, till his passing last year. Brother Seal has prepared a

letter with full details for anyone interested.

The Tell City, IN Church of Christ announces that Bro. Logan Heeke is moving on. His last Sunday will be September 23, 2007. He and Elizabeth have accepted a position with Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries in Bowling Green, KY. He has served as pulpit minister for 2 years and we will greatly miss him and his family. Tell City also requests names of a minister to fill the pulpit position now available. Contact can be made through one of the elders: Michael Elaman (812) 547-7096, Francis Heeke (812) 547-6191, or Larry Bryant (812) 547-2533)

Mackville Church of Christ in central Kentucky is looking to the Lord to provide a preacher. Anyone interested in more information may contact Norman Darland, 195 Hwy 433, Mackville, KY 40040. (859) 262-5530.

WOODLAND SENIOR CITIZEN'S week is over for 2007 and what a blessing it was! There were at least 105 present plus some visitors who did not register. It was good to have so many different friends to come for the week from Louisiana, Florida, Illinois, Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, and maybe some other states were represented. Some folks stayed over for the Woodland Annual meeting on Saturday. We are thankful for each of you who took part in the evening services with Bro. Sonny Childs. Special thanks go out to Dick & Janell Lewis and to J.R. and Pie Satterfield for their planning and overseeing the week.

Cramer & Hanover (Lexington, KY) "WAKE UP AMERICA" was the message several from Cramer heard last Sunday night from

former PLO Terrorist Walid Shoebat. "In a world of war (not peace) American Christians continue sleeping as the giant of Islam has struck fear into our hearts." Convinced he was on the side of evil, he became an advocate for his former enemy (Israel). Walid, a dedicated Christian, now bases his decisions and actions on Biblical truths. If "A Night to Honor Israel" comes to your city and he speaks, try to go. You will not be disappointed as you gain insights into the historical & political activities that are presently going on, especially on college and university campuses.

Searching for Past Issues of W&W? Janice Oar Parish is the niece of J. R. Clark, former W&W editor. She has many past issues of W&W, and is willing to give them to anyone who will pay the postage. There are bound volumes of 1953 plus all years from 1960-64. And loose copies of these complete years: 1965-68, 1971-2, 1974-77, 1980 and '82. For other years between 1955 till now there are many issues too--but not all. Anyone who is looking for issues you missed or lost from those years may contact her via e-mail: jrppc@charter.net. Or write her at 3436 Officers Chapel Road, Cookeville, TN 38506. Phone: 931-537-2244.

Pepperdine University (Malibu, California) will be hosting their annual Pepperdine Bible Lectures April 29-May 2, 2008 and have invited Moto & Yoriko Nomura to attend and speak. As many of you know, Moto is quite a historian and has a collection of literature, records, photographs, memorabilia, etc of the Stone-Campbell Movement from all countries around the Pacific Rim. He is considering placing his collection of materials

related to Churches of Christ in Japan in the Churches of Christ Heritage Center at Pepperdine University.

History of Gallatin, TN Church
Daniel Gordon, associate minister of Gallatin Church of Christ, writes: "I have worked for this church for almost 2 years now, and I've loved it tremendously. Great people here! As a graduate student of Lipscomb University, I am researching our congregation's history." He is looking for information and resources so he can answer various questions, including: Through what course of events did Gallatin become a premillennial Church of Christ? How has Gallatin COC's premillennialism related to its other distinct beliefs, such as the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, etc.? How have these beliefs shaped the atmosphere--past, present, and future--of this church?

If anyone has information that may help him, please send it to gordon_greek@yahoo.com

Daniel's note to awv concluded, "You may already know this [yes], but Lipscomb University has not been anti-premillennial in years. For them, that controversy lies in the past. The current faculty there is nothing like the faculty of the days in which the premill churches were pounded so hard. The 'mainline' has, in my opinion, been robbed of eschatology for the most part, and their views of 'the end' are rather simple and ignore substantial portions of Scripture. While I am not a dispensationalist, I

do value highly the careful way in which premillennialists handle Scripture, *both* Old and New Testaments."

Jim Embree highly recommends the following web site: www.cufi.org (Christians United for Israel). From the "History" section: "Israel is in peril. The President of Iran has threatened to wipe Israel off the map and he's rapidly acquiring the nuclear technology with which to make good on this threat. In the meantime, Iran's proxies in Hezbollah and Hamas are arming themselves at an alarming rate, and Hamas has been firing hundreds of missiles into Southern Israel." Check out this very informative website as you "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." (Psa. 122:6)

The Pleasant Grove Church of Christ, located between the towns of Lyons and Linton, IN, is searching for a part-time minister, perhaps someone who is retired that would like additional income. To many W&W readers, Pleasant Grove is probably best known as the church where Orell Overman ministered for many years. For more information, contact Wally Swaby at 812: 890-8428 or at wswaby@minerbroadband.com

Robert Garrett - Meetings in Winchester, Ky

Brother Robert Garrett, on furlough from Zimbabwe, will speak in revival meetings at Belmont Church of Christ, Nov. 25-28 (Sun.-Wed.). Night meetings will be at 7:00.

What is your Number?

Joyce Broyles

In the last days, we are told, people will be branded with the number "666" so that they can buy and sell. That designation will show their allegiance to the Antichrist. Those who want to stand for Christ will be persecuted. Would I wear that number?

As a librarian, I have been wondering about that. I am well acquainted with labeling things by using numbers. Usually, the things I label are books or other kinds of media, but perhaps people could be included in that also.

In 1876, Melville Dewey first published his *Classification and Subject Index* with decimal classification and relative index added the following year. Amassing all of the information at that time and categorizing it into ten major divisions, Dewey set up the Dewey Decimal System that is still used today. Additional or new information can be subdivided by tens and after the decimal point, it can go on indefinitely, ever more specific. In library circles, the maxim is 'the smaller the book spine, the longer the number.'

When teaching students how to use the library, I told a little story to explain how Dewey came up with his system. He used the cave man approach. The man came out of his cave and asked, "Who am I?" (100 - Philosophy). He looked up and realized there had to be a Supreme Being in charge (200 - Religion). He looked around and saw other cave people and wanted to protect his property from them (300 - Social Sciences). He wanted to communicate with them (400 - Language). Together they discovered fire, rain, plants, and animals (500 - Pure Science). With their new knowledge, they invented things (600 - Technology). With the new inventions, they had leisure time for sports, games, art and music (700 - Fine Arts). They sat around the camp fire and told stories to their children (800 - Literature). Then they wanted their children to remember all that they had accomplished in their lifetime (900 - History).

Stories about specific people and their accomplishments are included in history. Books about one person is an individual biography while books about several people are called collective biographies. These are all lumped together in the 900 section as B or 920. No one has his own number, with two exceptions.

In Dewey's mind, only two people in history deserved to have his own number. The first is William Shakespeare, who wrote many literary works and has many books written about him and his works.

Dewey assigned him the number 822.33, which comes under English literature.

The other person who rated his own number is Jesus Christ. Many books have been written about him and his works. Dewey assigned him the number 232, which comes under Christian theology and includes works about his person and offices, royal office, priesthood, intercession, and his family.

In public libraries, the 200 shelf is usually the smallest. Not many religious books are accessioned, and most of those are classified 291 for mythology. Only in church libraries and a Family Life Center lending library which focused on religious books did I see the 200 shelf expand to cover about 90% of the shelves.

For forty years, I cataloged books. Each day, patrons asked reference questions that could be answered with a number. The number was the shelf address of the book with the answers. That number represented the subject of the book.

While people will wear a number in the last days, what of now? What number would I wear if I had to show the subject of my heart? If classifying my life according to whom I most imitate, would the number show whose I am? Would the number reflect Jesus, Shakespeare, or Antichrist?

The Bible tells me in John 3:16 that Jesus wants me for his own. Acts 2:38 tells me how to do that. As volatile as the world is today, wouldn't it be a good thing for me to choose to follow Jesus? Yes, that is the number I want on my label.

Persecution and Testimony in Colombia, South America

Serious violations of religious freedom in Latin America are at their worst in Colombia where actors from all the armed groups involved in the violence there specifically target church leaders for assassination and threats. More than 150 Protestant pastors have been assassinated in the past 3 years, alongside a number of Roman Catholic priests and one bishop.

Over 40 churches are currently closed under threat in areas controlled by leftist guerrilla groups, FARC and the ELN. All the armed groups restrict church activities to different degrees in areas under

their control. Christian children and their families who refuse attempts by all the armed groups (including the paramilitaries) to recruit them have been threatened and murdered as punishment.

There are no numbers on how many Christians have been forcibly displaced because of their faith by armed groups who have taken control of their region but it is thought that they make up a sizeable portion of the 3-4 million internally displaced. Christian women are frequently the victims of rape as punishment for their husbands refusing to cooperate or aid the armed groups for reasons of faith.

Now some GOOD News, still from Colombia, So. America

Violent bombings & shoot-outs between leftist guerrillas, right-wing para-militaries, drug-dealers, Colombian army forces and even satanic cults has pushed Colombia to the brink of anarchy. **No group recognizes neutrality as an option in this 35-year-old war that demands every person to take sides.** There's no hiding place within Colombia's borders.

In So. America's most violent country, Colombia's Bella-vista National Jail was its most violent prison until two Christian believers brought the gospel to the prison in 1990 and stopped a riot. Hundreds of inmates -- among them the nation's most notorious killers--accepted Christ, and **the prison's murder rate plummeted from sometimes 60 in a month to less than one a year.**

Now a Bellavista Bible Institute thrives in the prison. Some graduates who completed their prison sentences have become full-time Christian workers in ministries such as halfway houses that enable other released Christian prisoners to transition to life outside Bellavista. Informal Bible studies abound in cellblocks once stained in graffiti written in victims' blood. Even as Colombia continues its downward spiral into violence and anarchy, Bellavista's revival serves as a laboratory case-in-point that the gospel can rescue this seemingly hopeless nation

YEAH, BUT WILL YOU GIVE UP YOUR PEW FOR ME?

All churches think themselves to be friendly. Just ask them and they will tell you! But being friendly to each other is not the same as being friendly to guests and newcomers.

Last year my family and I stopped to worship with a church while on vacation. The foyer was abuzz with activity, warm greetings, handshakes and hugs -- except for us. There we stood, and for quite some time; me, my wife, our two kids (both under four) and my mother-in-law. No one -- not exaggerating here -- even acknowledged our presence. Finally I grabbed a guy by the arm and asked where our kids should attend Bible class and he did not know! Yet, if I were to ask someone from this church if they were a friendly bunch the answer would be, without hesitation, in the affirmative.

Then there was the church my sister visited with her husband in their community. They approached a glass door which, to them, seemed to be the main entrance; but they found it locked. They knocked and saw people turn to see them through the door, but no one stirred. They knocked again, and were just about to search out another entrance, when finally someone -- with great effort -- came and unlocked the door. The first words from this person were not words of welcome. My sister and her husband were basically scolded for attempting to enter through that door since it was never used. Do you think they ever returned there?

I have a friendliness test for churches: Will members give up their favorite pew for a guest? While the guest speaker at a church once, I was actually asked to get up because I was sitting in someone's spot on the pew!

When guests come into our midst we should never assume they know anything about our church culture and where they need to be and when. We should be extremely sensitive to their needs, and help make their worship experience as easy and stress-free as possible from the moment they park their car until the last "amen" is said.

I already know the answer if I were to ask you if your church is friendly. What I really want to know is -- will you give up your pew for me?

--Danny Dodd, in *The Gatepost*, July 15, 2007, bulletin of Gateway Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida. (via Gary Pearson)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER, TOGETHER

GracEmail by Edward Fudge

Someone asks how it is that I do not fit the mold of any particular denomination, and agree at times with various groups across Christendom. Is not that being unfaithful to the tradition in which I was reared and to which I belong?

* * *

I am convinced that each major Christian group began by a move of God's Spirit to recover, renew or restore some element of Christian teaching, life or experience which was then dormant, lagging or lacking in the church at large. All of us need all the truth -- and we should not fail to receive it just because someone else found it first.

We must also learn to eat the meat and throw away the bones. Every part of the Church has abuses and extremes, confusions and errors, which we do well to reject and to avoid. But we also need to avoid the mistake of the blind men who touched different parts of the elephant and respectively concluded that the animal resembled a rope and a wall. Their individual truths were not wrong -- they were simply incomplete.

The point is not who said it first, or what our tradition has always held. If it came from God, it's for all his people. I want all the truth anyone else has found -- and I want to share with others all of God's truth that I might have found. Only by such a quest will we come to realize the wholeness of the universal church.

Two Legs or a Piece of an Ear

By John P. DiMarzio

Two leg bones or a piece of an ear is not much to have left from one of your favorite sheep. It won't win a blue ribbon at the county fair. It sure isn't worth reaching into a lion's mouth for. Yet in the book of Amos God presents Himself as a shepherd who "snatches from the lion's mouth two leg bones or a piece of an ear" in an effort to rescue what's left of His chosen people.

How does Amos 3:12 relate to us? At least five lessons suggest themselves to us. The first of these relates to the world. Whether

intentionally or not, the world seems to take us apart on a daily basis. You get up in the morning ready to face a new day, go to the kitchen, pour a heaping bowl of cereal, and reach into the refrigerator to get the milk. No! It's not all gone, but there's only enough to dampen two flakes. So off to work you go, stomach growling, only to find your boss anxiously awaiting your arrival. No, it's not to give you a raise; it's to let you know how much your first mistake in five years has cost the company. And the day has only just begun; on and on it goes. It seems as though the world at times is like a lion waiting to devour us.

A second lesson we can see in Amos is that God wants what's left. When you've been beaten down by the world or life's circumstances or feel that your family and friends have all deserted you, God will still take what's left. He took what was left of the thief on the cross. Just a few precious moments was all the thief had left; the world had received its portion. God took what was left and gave him eternal life.

Thirdly, God never gives up on us – even when there's just a slight chance of redemption. Peter had denied God's only begotten Son three times. (Once is enough to mortally wound most friendships.) One book later we see Peter the evangelist preaching boldly to thousands.

A fourth application from this passage is that God can rebuild what is left. Job had lost all: property, family, money, and his physical health. All he had left was three well-meaning friends, who picked at his supposed flaws. This was not the end for Job; God re-established him and returned all he lost plus more.

Finally God-will fight for us. If you don't believe that, next time you are at the zoo, try snatching something out of the lion's mouth. God fought for Israel time and time again – even when the majority of their problems were self-inflicted, as ours are.

Feel like you only have two leg bones and a piece of an ear left? Take heart. God can still use you!

(via Jerry Carmichael's bulletin)

BAPTISM: SYMBOL OF ASSURANCE

Leroy Garrett

It is common for Christians to be unsure of their salvation. Even committed, long-term believers often equivocate when asked if they are confident they will go to heaven. They hope so, but they think it presumptuous to be all that sure. Some say something like, "Yes, if I'm found faithful." This may only compound the problem, for how faithful does one have to be to go to heaven? So long as we think in terms of "doing our part" we will never be sure about our eternal destiny, for we will always wonder if we are sufficiently doing our part.

In his mercy the God of heaven anticipated this problem by giving us a sign or symbol whereby we can know we are saved. To be buried with Christ in baptism in the likeness of his death, and to be raised with him in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5) is a symbol of our salvation. It is like the wedding ring. The bride wears "proof" -- a symbol -- on her finger that she is married.

Or it is like the naturalization certificate signed by the judge whereby the alien knows that he is a citizen. If he has doubts about his citizenship -- could it have been only a dream? -- he has the proof in a frame hanging on the wall. "See," he can say to his friends, pointing to the certificate, "I have proof that I am a citizen."

That's one of the purposes of baptism -- "the answer (response) of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). To have a good or clear conscience is to have assurance. To those who doubt their salvation we can say, "Did you not go down to the river to pray, and were you not baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?" If she can answer yes, then we can say, "Then you have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and salvation." While certificates of baptism may not be necessary, they are appropriate in that they certify for all concerned that an initiation has taken place -- initiation into Christ and the community of faith. And it provides the same kind of confirmation as a wedding or naturalization certificate.

If there weren't such a symbol as baptism -- an outward sign of what has happened within -- we'd have to invent something. We have such signs of assurance all around us. How do you know you've graduated? The diploma is your symbol of assurance. How do you know you've left Pennsylvania and are now in Ohio. The sign says, "Entering Ohio." So you know where you are.

How do you know you're saved? You've been to the river and been baptized! That is the sign that God has ordained -- hear it! baptism is an ordinance of God, not our invention -- whereby you can know you're saved. It is my conscience's response to what God has done for me. I hear his testimony that baptism is for the remission of sins. I obey him, so I have the assurance -- a symbol of assurance.

I can be as certain that I am saved as I am that Christ rose from the dead. I have the testimony from God that he raised Christ from the dead, so I know. I also have testimony from God that when I was baptized -- as a believing penitent -- he formally forgives my sins. So I know. That is the problem in not being baptized. One may be saved, but he does not have the sign of assurance.

We can now understand why Luther would talk back to the pope the way he did. "The pope can't talk that way about me, for I've been baptized just as he has." Luther had his baptismal certificate on the wall, so he knew he was as much a Christian as the pope or anyone else. He submitted to the act that God has ordained whereby he can know he is saved. No equivocating, no uncertainty. I've been baptized, so I know.

All this talk that this makes baptism a work on our part -- and we're not saved by works -- is sheer nonsense. Tell that to Peter. He not only said that believers were to "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38), but that baptism is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). Tell Paul that baptism is a work on our part and he will say, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Paul here makes it clear that baptism is *not* regeneration, but it is the *washing* or *bath* of regeneration. Regeneration or rebirth takes place within through faith and repentance, the bath (baptism) is the outward act that gives witness to the inward reality. That is when one knows he has been reborn -- he has been washed, the symbol or sign of his regeneration.

This is the assurance that Paul gave the Corinthians, some of whom had been guilty of very grievous sins. After naming several ugly sins, the apostle tells them, "But you were washed" (1 Cor. 6:11). They were once idolaters, adulterers, and sodomites, but they were baptized into Christ for remission of their sins. They are now saved, and they can know it. Baptism is their symbol of assurance.

This is an appropriate encouragement to a sister or brother burdened by feelings of insecurity -- *Have you forgotten that you were washed clean when you were baptized into Christ?*

Paul also gave the Colossians this kind of assurance. After referring to circumcision of the flesh -- a sign that one was truly a Jew -- he refers to "the circumcision made without hands" which was "the circumcision of Christ" -- a reference to the renewal of heart and mind. He goes on to say, "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2:11-12).

The Jews had a sign identifying who they were -- literal circumcision. Christians too have a sign -- circumcision of the heart by Christ -- which is formally expressed in being buried with Christ in baptism and being raised with him through faith.

This passage should put to rest once for all the mentality that baptism is a work we perform to be saved, or "doing our part." Here Paul makes it clear that baptism is a work of grace -- "the working of God" as he puts it. In baptism we do nothing except to respond to God's grace. It is something done to us. It is in the middle voice -- we do not act, we are acted upon by the work of God.

That baptism is a sign or symbol of assurance is seen even in our Lord's certification as the Son of God. Jesus was into his 30s before he was openly declared to be divine -- and this is when he was baptized, not before. He may have had some insight all those years as to who he was, but it was not "officially" certified until his baptism. Both Mark and Luke have the assurance given in the second person, to Jesus himself: "Then (coming up from the water) a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mk. 1:11). In Matthew the announcement is in the third person, to those standing by, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17).

Jesus knew for sure who he was -- at his baptism. We know for sure who we are -- at our baptism. It is a gracious sign of certainty. We know when we have left one state (darkness) and entered another (light) -- the sign says so!

Unfortunately, there are those believers who dismiss baptism as only a "church ordinance" and unrelated to salvation. In many a pulpit baptism is denigrated as marginal at best -- "Baptism won't save you," they like to say. That can be challenged, for an apostle says in so many words, "baptism now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:21). There must be *some sense* in which baptism saves, or an apostle would not have

said that it does. It is, of course, Christ who saves; it is the grace of God that saves. But the Bible says that baptism saves! We have seen that it at least saves in the sense that it is the formal sign or symbol of forgiveness of sins.

We can only conclude that those who dismiss or neglect baptism do not have the assurance of salvation. This is not to say they are not saved. But they do not have the formal sign of assurance that God has ordained. They may seek assurance in other things -- perhaps their feelings or their experience, iffy as they are. What deprivation! They are like a bride without a wedding ring.

This is not to say there are not other assurances beside baptism that we are indeed children of God. But these are the *ongoing* assurances of our relationship with God once we have the *initial* assurance in baptism. For example, 1 John 3:24 names two ways we "know" that Christ abides in us -- by keeping his commandments and by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And 1 John 3:14 says it is our love for each other that gives us assurance that we have passed from death to life.

In Romans 8:16 we have this assurance: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Peter finds assurance in the "exceedingly great and precious promises" which make us partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

If we identify our life in Christ as "the Way" -- which the Bible does --- then it is baptism that places us on the Way. It provides the sure sign that we are in the Way. Along the uneven journey -- with all its difficulties -- there are facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, promises to be enjoyed. Admonitions and warnings keep us alert. These are assurances of our ongoing salvation, which is kept by God's faithfulness and our humble response, however imperfect. It is all grace.

The apostle Paul speaks for us all: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12)

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